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Chile's quest to improve its image abroad

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ABSTRACT

During the past 20 years, Chile has implemented several strategies to enhance its visibility and reputation in the world. These efforts have been primarily targeted at the United States, Europe and Asia, aiming to position the country as a stable and blossoming nation that escapes some unfavourable stereotypes associated with Latin America. A different perspective arises when looking at neighbouring nations. People from Bolivia, Peru and, to a lesser extent, Argentina, have a less positive image of Chile, an issue that has impacted the relation with these countries particularly in areas such as trade, energy and even security, with Chile sometimes being labelled an 'isolated' nation. This article suggests that an extension of these initiatives to the neighbouring countries may contribute to ease tensions and serve as a future reserve of soft power. The case of Chile may be relevant to illustrate how small and medium-sized states attempt to capture the attention of foreign publics, as well as advancing the debate concerning the different audiences that should be considered when crafting national images.

Keywords: public diplomacy; nation branding; Latin America; small and medium-sized states; Chile

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2010, after several years of negotiations, Chile became the first South American country – and the second in Latin America after Mexico – to join the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD (OECD, 2010). According to the OECD, Chile represented a success story to the whole world, with two uninterrupted decades of democracy and economic development, an average growth of 5 per cent per year, an important reduction of poverty, prudent tax policies, and a responsible management of the 2008 global financial crisis. Some media reports celebrated the announcement as a confirmation that Chile was ‘well ahead of any other Latin American countries’ (Long, 2010). The news could also be interpreted as a triumph for Chilean diplomacy, which had been working hard to position Chile as a stable and blossoming nation in the global imaginary. Not surprisingly, the invitation to join the OECD was perceived as a threshold to the first world, a call to be part of the global club of developed countries (Abarca Lucero, 2009).

Two months later, however, Chilean diplomacy faced a very different scenario. The country was forced to respond to a lawsuit filed in 2008 by Peru before the International Court of Justice, to resolve a claim for 35 000 square km of the Pacific Ocean currently under Chilean sovereignty (Xinhua, 2010). Although the verdict will not be known before late 2013, this move taken by Peru illustrated the failure of earlier attempts to find a negotiated solution, showing the futility of some goodwill gestures previously made by Chilean diplomacy, such as returning thousands of books stolen during the War of the Pacific in the late nineteenth century (La Nación, 2007).

Both episodes are symptoms of a contradiction that Chile seems to be experiencing. On one hand, during the past 20 years, the country has employed several strategies aimed at enhancing its visibility and reputation in the eyes of the world, particularly those of the United States, the European Union and the main economies of Asia. On the other, relations with its neighbours – more specifically Bolivia and Peru – during the same period have been stained by different episodes of tension, demonstrating the limited soft

power that Chile possesses within its own region. In addition to the impasse with Peru, the last decade has witnessed disputes with Bolivia and Argentina, with only narrow success in building alliances with other Latin American nations during these episodes.

While Chile's strategies to improve its reputation and visibility have been appropriately aligned with two of the main goals of the country's foreign policy – the internationalization of the economy and a growing insertion into the international community (Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008; Embassy of Chile to the United States, 2013; Fuentes and Fuentes, forthcoming) – a third goal has apparently not met the same degree of success: a proactive involvement within Latin America. Thus, while the country's security has not been directly threatened, these disputes have affected matters such as energy, trade and international reputation. Although Chile is still seen as an economic model for the region, on various occasions it has been labelled an 'isolated country', 'the rich kid on the block' or even 'the new Phoenicians of Latin America' (for example The Economist, 2004; Rother, 2004). On the basis of an analysis of domestic and international news reports, this article suggests that public diplomacy and nation branding can arguably be effective tools to augment Chile's popularity among its neighbours, contributing to reduce tensions with these nations and paving the way for more concrete future achievements.

ICEBERGS, SURPRISES AND A COUNTRY THAT 'WORKS WELL'

In recent years, the attention of several authors has been drawn to the public diplomacy of small and medium-sized states (for example, Leonard and Small, 2003; Batora, 2005; Cooper, 2009; Gilboa, 2009; Park, 2009). Owing to the limited material resources of these states, public diplomacy and nation branding can be useful instruments to influence the global agenda and even contribute to the development of these countries (Anholt, 2005). However, in contrast with major powers, which will always be in the public eye notwithstanding their actions, small and medium-sized states may sometimes simply wish to capture attention in order to counteract their lack of visibility in the global imaginary (Batora, 2005). The case of Chile can be useful to illustrate this point, and may also be

relevant to advance the debate regarding the different global and regional audiences that countries should take into account when crafting their national images.

Although Chile's economic transformation, which started in the mid-1970s, was positively regarded among some international elites, the country became a pariah in the international realm during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Thus, Chile was perceived as the home of one of the longest authoritarian regimes in South America, in which human rights were violated with impunity (Prieto Larraín, 2011). Once Chile recovered democracy in 1990, some of the main goals established for its foreign policy were the internationalization of the economy, involvement within the international community and a proactive participation in Latin America (Fuentes and Fuentes, forthcoming). Given that the economic model of the country drives it to search for new markets and attract investments, Chile paid special attention to the image it was projecting to the world, most particularly to shake off the shadow of the Pinochet years and improve its international reputation (Abarca Lucero, 2009; Prieto Larraín, 2011).

A clear example comes from 1992, when the country participated in the Universal Exhibition of Seville. The main attraction of its pavilion was an iceberg, brought directly from Antarctica. Its exact meaning was a matter of dispute at a domestic and international level, but the commission in charge of the Chilean pavilion in Seville attempted to differentiate the country from its Latin American counterparts, associated with stereotypes of chaos and inefficiency. Instead, Chile was portrayed as a cold, serious and formal nation, highlighting its recovered democracy, economic success, as well as its natural resources (Abarca Lucero, 2009; Korowin, 2010; Prieto Larraín, 2011). Several Chilean scholars debated about the alleged emphasis on consumerism represented by the iceberg; however, the idea was considered a success because it allowed Chile to be 'seen' by the world (Abarca Lucero, 2009; Korowin, 2010; for an example of the coverage, see The New York Times, 1991).

In the following years, trade arguably became the main driver behind Chile's interest in promoting its image abroad. Under the management of ProChile (the Chilean Trade

Commission), the country developed different marketing strategies to broaden and diversify its exports attempting to migrate from exporting raw materials to creating products with a higher added value (Prieto Larraín, 2011; ProChile, 2013). In the mid-2000s, the need to give these campaigns more consistency and cohesion led ProChile to outline for the very first time a strategy of nation branding that would involve every sector of society and would be the nucleus of the actions behind commercial and economic positioning (Abarca Lucero, 2009). This strategy would communicate three main ideas about Chile: a spectacular, diverse and transparent geography; the warmth and efficiency of its people; and the stability and strength of its institutions (Abarca Lucero, 2009). While the idea of a nation brand enjoyed consensus within the country, some of the strategies implemented by ProChile were rather controversial, such as the short-lived slogan ‘Chile, All Ways Surprising’ (Zárate, 2009; The Economist, 2010).

The year 2009 brought a shift in direction, with the creation of Fundación Imagen de Chile, a new institution aimed at coordinating and capitalizing the public and private efforts that help to promote Chile across the world (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2013a). In 2010, ‘Chile hace bien’, meaning both ‘Chile is good for you’ and ‘Chile works well’, was unveiled as the guiding concept for the actions to follow, in an attempt to emphasise Chile’s stability and reliability. While the double meaning of that concept could be replicated in languages like Portuguese, for English-speaking countries only the first translation was chosen; therefore the idea of the country’s efficiency was overlooked (The Economist, 2010).

Albeit some of the officers of the Fundación have described its work as public diplomacy (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2009), it seems its current efforts are still understood almost exclusively in terms of nation branding. This may perhaps be related to the fact that the context in which the Fundación works is not remarkably different, given that the foreign policy of the country has not undergone radical changes, and trade still plays a significant role in positioning Chile abroad (Bakit, 2011). However, while ProChile focussed its actions on the United States, the European Union and Asia, where Chile’s main economic

interests lie today (Abarca Lucero, 2009), the Fundación did not seem to have a clear geographic strategy.

EARTHQUAKES, MINERS AND STUDENTS: THE GLOBAL MEDIA PERSPECTIVE ON CHILE

The strategies led by both ProChile and Fundación Imagen de Chile have relied strongly on marketing and public relations, with the guidance of agencies such as Interbrand and Ogilvy Public Relations (Mercopress, 2004; Ogilvy Public Relations, 2011), and the advice of expert Simon Anholt (Anholt, 2009). These campaigns have included organizing seminars, participating in international fairs, press trips, paid advertisements in newspapers, promotional videos and websites in several languages. (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2011a; see also the website www.thisischile.cl). The budget has been modest, and only once the Fundación received US\$10 million for a whole year (The Economist, 2010), a sum that was subsequently reduced in the following years and is considerably low compared to the annual US\$20 million invested by Costa Rica or the \$15 million spent by Peru (González, 2012).

However, as with several small and medium-sized states (Leonard and Small, 2003; Batora, 2005), the main challenge for Chile has historically been the scarce attention it has received from the global media. More worryingly, it continues to be associated with the Pinochet dictatorship (Markessinis, 2009). Consequently, Fundación Imagen de Chile has attempted to draw the interest of international journalists to other matters, such as the Dakar Rally (a motorcycle competition held since 2009 in Argentina and Chile, and in later editions Peru), the ALMA telescope (the most powerful in the world, built in the Atacama Desert) or the country's tourist attractions (such as the capital Santiago, chosen by Lonely Planet as one of the 10 best cities to visit in 2012) (ThisisChile.cl, 2013). The fact that some of these stories have effectively been picked up by media around the world (see, for instance, AFP, 2011; Gosh, 2011; Leung, 2011) could be considered a sign of the success of these campaigns.

However, the attention of international journalists has not in fact been fully focused on these events. According to some studies by Fundación Imagen de Chile, almost a third of the coverage the country receives by the international media is related to sports, especially because of Chilean football players who participate in European and Latin American leagues (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2013b; Salvo, 2013). In addition, the most widely covered news stories about the country in the last couple of years have been totally unexpected situations, which is somewhat ironic, considering that the former slogan ‘All ways surprising’ was eliminated precisely because the stability and predictability were arguably more representative of the country (The Economist, 2010). These stories are the February 2010 earthquake, the rescue of the 33 miners in October of the same year (Pujol, 2010), and to a lesser extent, the 2011 student demonstrations (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2011b).

Interestingly enough, the first two were originally framed as disasters, yet ultimately proved useful to portray the country in a more positive light. For instance, in the aftermath of the earthquake, the global media initially focused on the most dramatic aspects of the story, such as the magnitude of the quake (8.8 Richter, 500 times more powerful than the one that had devastated Haiti a month earlier), the destruction of towns and cities and the number of victims (Pujol, 2011). However, journalists soon realized that the death toll was low considering the magnitude of the quake and the level of destruction was not as severe as originally expected. Consequently, the focus shifted to the country’s capacity to respond effectively to this catastrophe, praising the successful application of anti-seismic laws, which were seen as evidence of good governance and control of corruption, as well as the economic strength of the country, with its prosperity considered a relevant factor behind this effective preparation (Kaufmann and Tessada, 2010; Pujol, 2011). Some reports even proposed Chile as a model of anti-seismic construction for the United States (Welch, Vergano and Hawley, 2010) and a couple of months later, a delegation of Chilean architects travelled to the Expo Shanghai to promote their work as a ‘miracle of anti-seismic architecture’ (Chilearch, 2010).

In the case of the miners, what had begun as a terrible accident finally emerged as probably one of the most important accomplishments for Chile's global image. The rescue of the 33 men trapped 688 m underground for almost 70 days was followed live on television by a billion spectators, making it one of the most viewed media events ever (Franklin, 2011). This success was not random. The Chilean government tightly managed the communications of the event² in order to ensure the story would not only be a source of inspiration, but would also portray the country as an example of success and efficiency (Franklin, 2011). The global media followed this narrative, with *The Wall Street Journal* claiming that the rescue was 'a smashing victory for free-market capitalism' (Henninger, 2010), and *The Washington Post* arguing that this was a reward to Chile's '20-year record as Latin America's most free country' (*The Washington Post*, 2010). Consequently, although some authors considered the event as a 'rebranding' of Chile (Jones, 2010), the rescue of the miners could also be seen as a means to attract the attention of the international media towards the very issues that the country has attempted to communicate to the world over the past two decades.

The conflict with the students has been more problematic. Some influential media have seen the demonstrations against the current Chilean educational system as grounds to criticize the country's socio-economic model and the local authorities (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2011b). To mention a few examples, for the BBC, the violent clashes between police and students reminded the world of those that occurred during Pinochet's dictatorship (Long, 2011); *The Economist* remarked on 'the exorbitant cost of for-profit universities' (*The Economist*, 2011) and how the conflict arguably revealed the economic inequalities and the lack of legitimacy of Chile's political class (*The Economist*, 2012);

² The Chilean authorities produced an official live television broadcast of the rescue. In different interviews, government officials denied any type of political exploitation of the event and held that the broadcast simply intended to prevent the alleged chaos that would be produced by a large number of journalists trying to cover the story at the same time (for example, Cooperativa, 2010). However, according to American journalist Jonathan Franklin, the Chilean authorities kept a strict supervision over all the videos released when the workers were still trapped underground, editing out images of the men ill or crying. He claimed that during the rescue several restrictions were placed on the accredited media, adopting measures such as blocking the view of cameras and photographers with a giant Chilean flag, in order to prevent alternative shots of the operation. Moreover, an avalanche would have occurred inside the mine while they were still rescuing the workers, a fact that remained unnoticed by the journalists covering the story (Franklin, 2011).

and The Financial Times described how the protests ‘have turned Sebastián Piñera into the country’s least-loved president since the return of democracy in 1990 and exposed serious social discontent’ (Webber, 2011). But while the conflict is far from being resolved, it is still not clear what impact it has had on the country’s image abroad.

On a global level, Chile is far from being the most successful country in terms of reputation and image. In 2012 it was listed only as number 38 among the 50 countries of the Nation Branding Index and as the 34th out of 118 countries in the Country Brand Index of 2012 (Fundación Imagen de Chile, 2011c; FutureBrand, 2012; Salvo, 2013). According to some of these rankings, however, it remains among the Latin American nations with the most positive image and in 2012 was listed as number 2 in FutureBrand’s ranking of 15 ‘Tomorrow’s Leading Country Brands’ (FutureBrand, 2012). Other numbers are also favourable: its economy is one of the strongest in the region, the country has signed almost 60 free trade agreements so far, has twice occupied nonpermanent seats in the United Nations Security Council and has participated in several international multilateral initiatives (Fuentes and Fuentes, forthcoming). Albeit it is not possible to determine the exact contribution of Chile’s nation branding and public diplomacy strategies to these accomplishments, at least it appears that they have been effectively aligned with two of the main objectives of the country’s foreign policy: the internationalization of the economy and its increasing participation within the international community. However, when looking at a third aim mentioned earlier – the proactive involvement within Latin America – the situation looks more troublesome, especially when analysing the relations with Chile’s neighbouring countries.

‘THE RICH KID ON THE BLOCK’: CHILE AND THE STRAINED RELATION WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS

Although during the 1980s several Latin American countries expressed their solidarity with those Chileans who were against the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, the recovery of democracy also meant the return of old differences, which have been partly aggravated by the economic success of the Chilean model (Rother, 2004). Particularly, relations with

its three neighbours – Bolivia, Peru and, to a lesser extent, Argentina – have been somewhat strained, following a pattern that started to appear towards the end of the nineteenth century, despite the common history shared by these countries. To mention only a few examples, Argentinean hero José de San Martín brought independence to Chile (Gutiérrez Escudero, 2007) and both San Martín and Chilean founding father Bernardo O'Higgins fought for the liberation of Peru (Encyclopedia of Nationalism, 2001). In fact, according to a survey published by Chilean newspaper *La Tercera* in 2010 (La Tercera, 2010), 78 per cent of Peruvians and 61 per cent of Bolivians do not trust Chileans, and 37 per cent of Argentinians believe that Chile is the least friendly country in Latin America. Similarly, a 2012 survey by Fundación Imagen de Chile showed that, although Peruvians admire Chile's economic success, they hold that Chileans are known for being aggressive and cold. The same study assessed that, while Argentinians have a mostly positive image of Chile, lauding its economic and social progress, they could not understand why Chileans preferred order and security instead of joy and freedom, and around a quarter of the people surveyed in that country qualified Chileans as cold, unkind and individualistic (González, 2012).

However, this does not mean there have not been achievements. Chile has signed economic agreements with a majority of the countries in the region and has solved several territorial disputes (Fuentes and Fuentes, forthcoming). Some of the studies mentioned earlier observe that Chile has a very good reputation among citizens of Brazil, Mexico and Colombia (González, 2012). In addition, the last time the security of the country was actually threatened was in 1978, when Chile and Argentina were only minutes away from going to war (Smink, 2008). Nevertheless, this has not meant the disappearance of diplomatic controversies with neighbouring countries. For instance, in 2005 Chile was left on the verge of an energy crisis when then-President Nestor Kirchner suspended a gas exportation treaty owing to a domestic supply deficit (Cardoso, 2007). Chile recalled its ambassador to Argentina and the media of both countries revealed the lack of trust between the governments (Clarín, 2006). The situation was partially solved when Argentina began to import gas from Bolivia but exclusively for internal use, given that a referendum in the latter country explicitly established that not even 'a molecule' of

gas could be sold to Chile (Keller, 2006; Van Der Ree, 2010). More worryingly, some international media interpreted the episode as a failure for Chilean diplomacy (Power in Latin America, 2004).

UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ‘WAR OF THE PACIFIC’

Undoubtedly, the main focus of regional tensions has been with Bolivia and Peru. Both countries joined forces against Chile between 1879 and 1883 during the ‘War of the Pacific’ (Beckman, 2009), a conflict driven mainly by the ambition to control the nitrate fields on Bolivian territory. By the end of the war, Chile had increased its territory by one-third, securing for itself invaluable mineral resources. Conversely, Bolivia lost the city of Antofagasta and with it, access to the Pacific Ocean, while the Peruvian city of Arica was annexed to Chile’s territory after a 2-year occupation of the capital Lima by the Chilean army (Beckman, 2009).

Regardless of the political tendency of its governments, the loss of the coastal access became one of the axes of Bolivian foreign policy, especially in its relations with Chile. It was not until the second half of the 1970s, when both countries were under dictatorships, that an agreement seemed somewhat closer, with Chile offering a corridor to the sea in exchange for an equivalent area ceded by Bolivia. However, some of the factors that conspired against it were Peru’s lack of support (whose opinion must be part of any agreement regarding this issue) as well as the fierce opposition of the Bolivian media, which published maps of large portions of Bolivia under Chilean sovereignty. Some sectors of the Bolivian army withdrew their backing of the proposal, and negotiations were brought to an end (Beckman, 2009).

Although peace was maintained, diplomatic relations between both countries were broken in 1978 and since then, there have been constant tensions, also expressed in the media. To mention a few examples, in June 2011, a Bolivian military patrol illegally entered the Chilean territory; after they were sent back to their country, Bolivian President Evo Morales decided to award the soldiers medals. Pictures of the men

receiving their awards from hands of Morales were given wide exposure in the press, television and social media in both countries, spurring one of the tensest moments of recent times (Los Tiempos, 2011). Furthermore, Evo Morales later announced his intention to present a case against Chile in the International Court of Justice (Castillo, 2011) to recover the coastal access, and assured his army that Bolivians would soon get their sea back (La Razón, 2011). The Chilean response came in November 2011, when President Sebastián Piñera announced that ‘our armed forces are ready to defend our sea’ (La Razón, 2011). In September 2012, another impasse occurred, when Evo Morales demanded maritime access during a speech at the United Nations (AFP, 2012), to which Sebastián Piñera later replied ‘We will defend, with all the strength of the world, our territory, our sea, our sky and our sovereignty’ (Emol, 2012).

The ‘War of the Pacific’ also left deep scars with Peru. Like Bolivia, Peru felt humiliated by the outcome of the conflict and witnessed how its neighbour enjoyed a new wealth thanks to the mineral resources found in former Peruvian territory (Van Der Ree, 2010). As a result, a gradual anti-Chilean sentiment began to play a relevant role in Peruvian politics, according to which, Chile was perceived as an aggressive, imperialistic country (Van Der Ree, 2010). More importantly, although both countries signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2006, this anti-Chilenism has sometimes become an obstacle for trade relations. In 2009, when the media in Peru disclosed the story of an alleged spy who was providing strategic information to Chile, a group of Peruvian representatives questioned the constitutional legitimacy of such an agreement (AFP, 2009). Furthermore, although he later claimed to have been misunderstood, the domestic and international media gave wide coverage to a story in which then-President Alan Garcia called Chile a *republicueta* or ‘banana republic’ (Cooperativa, 2009). Indeed, a year earlier, during Garcia’s administration, Peru presented the aforementioned lawsuit against Chile in the International Court of Justice, disputing the maritime border between the two countries (BBC News, 2008). Finally, the election of Ollanta Humala as President in 2011 was met with suspicion in Chile, because of some of his statements after his presidential candidacy in 2005, when he said, ‘we are an invaded country; economically, by Chilean

capital, and physically as well What does it mean to be anti-Chilean? To be a good Peruvian, nothing else' (Van Der Ree, 2010).

REPOSITIONING CHILE IN LATIN AMERICA

Generally speaking, the Chilean reaction – from some authorities, politicians, media and even academics – has been to hold that ‘there is nothing to negotiate’ (see, for example, the interview with a former Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Durán, 2011). The argument given is that these events are actually political tactics used by the neighbouring governments to shift the attention of its citizens from domestic conflicts towards issues of foreign policy (Briones, 2011). Accordingly, in terms of public diplomacy or nation branding, the actions carried out by Chile have been extremely scarce, or have at least had very little impact. Some exceptions have been the organization of joint events – such as the aforementioned Dakar Rally held between Chile, Argentina and nowadays Peru (Dakar, 2013), moments of ease in the media such as the attention paid by Bolivians to one of their fellow countrymen who was part of the group of 33 miners rescued in 2010 (Barrionuevo, 2010), and Chile’s failed attempt to post tourism advertisements in Lima’s main airport (Charpentier, 2012).

Although the limited financial resources and the relevance of trade may suggest that it is reasonable for Chile to concentrate its public diplomacy and nation branding efforts on its major economic partners, the country seems to be experiencing a sort of backfire. Some of the aforementioned controversies have become obstacles for sustaining good commercial relations with the neighbouring countries, as well as posing problems for Chile’s energy supply, and even arousing concern for the nation’s security. Furthermore, these disputes have been echoed by the media, not only in Latin America, but also in the rest of the world (for example, *The Economist*, 2007; Castillo, 2011; Schipani, 2012). As a result, Chile’s global reputation has been somewhat tarnished, with some reporters portraying it as an ‘isolated country’, ‘the rich kid on the block’ or ‘the new Phoenicians of Latin America’ (Rother, 2004), and with publications like *The Economist* openly backing Bolivia’s coastal demands, calling Chile’s position ‘anachronistic’ (The

Economist, 2003). Moreover, it seems that Chile has been confronted with the limits of its soft power, not only with its direct neighbours but also with other Latin American countries, for instance, upon attempting to build an alliance with Ecuador in order to strengthen its case against Peru in the International Court of Justice. Ecuador's response was at best, ambiguous, and the government of Rafael Correa ended up signing territorial agreements with Peru that arguably left Chile in a more fragile position (UPI, 2011).

It thus comes to light that, without abandoning the efforts it currently devotes to strengthening relations with the United States, Europe and Asia, Chile needs to develop a more active strategy of public diplomacy and nation branding towards Latin America. In doing so, Chile could partially mitigate some of the unfavourable perceptions it has among the citizens of its neighbouring countries. This matter becomes particularly relevant upon observing that, on certain occasions, the elites of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru have agreed on political and economic issues, such as during the presidencies of Ricardo Lagos in Chile, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in Bolivia and Alejandro Toledo in Peru. However, these agreements could sometimes not come into effect because of the unpopularity of the proposed policies among the general public, who perceived them as too favourable for Chile. Perhaps, one of the most obvious examples are the 'gas wars' in Bolivia, the uprising that followed Sánchez de Lozada's proposition to sell gas to the United States using Chile as a route and which forced him to put an abrupt end to his administration (Van Der Ree, 2010).

Although a potential public diplomacy towards Latin America must obviously be aligned with Chile's main foreign policy goals, its implementation should perhaps show a slightly different approach to those efforts aimed at other regions. First, its driver should not be exclusively trade – an issue that has also guided Chile's relations with the region, and which, as discussed before, has already met with some obstacles (Van Der Ree, 2010; Fuentes and Fuentes, forthcoming) –, but rather the creation of alliances with citizens of these countries and the projection of a more appealing image of Chile. Thus, the emphasis should not be on the portrayal of Chile as a *different* nation in Latin America – as the iceberg of 1992 did in Seville – but instead as a reliable friend, sharing a common

history of brotherhood with Bolivia, Peru and Argentina. Second, given that the tensions have repeatedly been exposed and fed by the media, the strategy should place particular emphasis not only on controlling potential areas of conflict that might arise in the media, but also on proposing subjects that may contribute to promoting a more positive country image. For instance, instead of hiding some of the social conflicts it has recently experienced, Chile may perhaps openly address and discuss them, in order to strengthen its democratic credentials and project an image of leadership in these areas.

Third, although potential communication campaigns in these countries might follow similar patterns to the ones aimed at other regions (press trips, meetings with foreign correspondents, use of social media), they should also pay attention to the opportunities offered by each country or, using the terminology of the literature in public diplomacy, they should do more ‘listening’ (Cull, 2008). For example, it is interesting to note that, although the relations between the governments of Carlos Mesa, from Bolivia, and Ricardo Lagos, from Chile, were particularly difficult in the mid-2000s (Camargo, 2004), at the very same time, ‘Operación Fama’, Bolivia’s first reality television show, premiered on local television, with a group of young aspiring celebrities competing with each other every week to win a trip to take singing lessons, precisely, in Chile (El Mundo de Bolivia, 2011). Perhaps, for the contestants of ‘Operación Fama’, Chile was not only a rival or an aggressive nation, but also a place full of new opportunities to materialize their dreams.

Likewise, these actions should be coordinated with other public and private efforts. Alongside the existing trade relations between Chile and these countries, there have been attempts to position Chile as a centre for medicine within the region (Santiago Salud, 2010), proposals of joining efforts with Peru in the mining industry (Andina, 2012) and suggestions to develop a system of scholarships for students from neighbouring countries (La Tercera, 2010). Perhaps, a good example to follow would be the agreement between Argentina and Chile to organize the Dakar Rally – together with ASO, the French company behind this motorcycle and car race – from 2009 on (Dakar, 2013). The governments and several private institutions of both countries have been involved in the

race, and Chile and Argentina have been rewarded with substantial media exposure and profits (Impulso Negocios, 2011). The fact that from 2012 onwards Peru has joined the race provides an excellent opportunity to amend ties with this nation. In addition, there are several projects carried out by the Chilean Agency of International Cooperation (AGCI, 2013), which attempt to foster integration between people from Chile, Argentina, Peru and Bolivia, and may deserve a more substantial visibility.

CONCLUSION

During the past 20 years, Chile has implemented a series of strategies to improve its reputation in the eyes of the world. In a similar way to other small and medium-sized states Chile has attempted to counteract its lack of visibility, alongside with the constant references to the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in the foreign media. These efforts have mainly been aimed at Europe, the United States and Asia, and have tried to position Chile as a stable and blossoming nation that escapes some of the unfavourable stereotypes associated with Latin America. Although these efforts have been only moderately successful in promoting new perspectives for Chile, they have clearly succeeded in publicizing positive images of the country in moments of crisis, such as the earthquake of 2010 and the rescue of 33 miners in the same year. In these cases, the general portrayal of Chile in the international media has been quite positive and the authorities have taken proper advantage of it.

However, on the basis of an analysis of news reports, a different perspective arises upon observing the neighbouring nations. People from Bolivia, Peru and, to a lesser extent, Argentina have a less positive image of Chile, and this issue has impacted the relation with these countries particularly in areas such as trade, energy and even security. On a global level, the international reputation of Chile has also been affected and has led the country to be labelled at certain moments an 'isolated' nation. Therefore, this article suggests that an extension of nation branding and public diplomacy initiatives to the neighbouring countries may contribute to ease some tensions with them.

These potential efforts could also serve Chile as a future reserve of soft power. At the time of writing this article, it was expected that the International Court of Justice would soon deliver its verdict on the territorial claims made by Peru. No matter how favourable or unfavourable the outcome may turn out to be, Chile should be prepared to counteract any potential focus of domestic or international tensions in its relationship with Peru.

Future research may further develop some of the observations made in this article and overcome its evident limitations, going beyond an examination of news reports and including interviews with authorities or specialists in the countries involved as well as audience analysis. However, the example of the young talents of ‘Operación Fama’ in Bolivia, who dreamed of taking singing lessons in Chile, might serve as inspiration for future actions that could promote a better understanding between these historically linked countries.

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